

Conversation with 56 year old black male, Washington, DC (Transcription)

START M59 B(6)

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Me? I was born here.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF I have. REal old. <gap> old (Packer) hospital-- New York AVenue and Kirby and Walden Street. That's a playground now. I've seen alot. I remember when I was <gap> a youngster, say about fourteen

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-- seventeen years old. You couldn't go to Dunbar School unless you was light skinned or had a <gap> background. A poor guy like me had to go to Armstrong. That was move like a trade, but the Dunbar was different. You've got to know so and so's son or so and so's daughter. Am I talking to fast?

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Am I talking too fast?

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FW <unintelligible text>

INF Ah, that one I saw was Audie Murphy, Helen Bank. It was in the service. You you remember that picture? It was a few years... oh actually he was in the service. Went there as a buck private see. And from there he just elevated up but he never got no higher that a seargent. But he did all the damage <gap> took chances, come back, come back to the United States to California. (I don't know whether to believe it or not) play boy you know, <gap> he's ah the most decorated ah ordinary boot soldier...it was a colonel what not or a general. That was at the <gap> that brought him back. Then I seen some gangster pictures too. I used to <gap>

FW <unintelligible text>

INF I like ah like ah like -- George Webb <gap>. I never saw much of those. That was Scarface in that. That was there. And he had <gap> an old tommy gun and shoot a man down like Oh -- Gangster pictures, you know. I was young then. I liked all that stuff. And Paul Newman he was in them. Well, he was a leader, and like if he wanted to get you bumped off, he don't do it hisself, he get somebody else to do it. Now Al Capoe, well he died natural life. He lived in Miami, Florida. I - I saw his home. Miami Beach, that's right.

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I was chauffeuring then.

Fw <unintelligible text>

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INF <gap> that's where he live at. Al Capone wearing twenty-five dollar shirts in the penitentiary. Twenty five dollar -- like you shirt you've got on. Twenty five dollars.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF No, I'm just saying ... am I talking too loud? I don't know, I just I just like to talk. Got a good gift of gab. Only thing about me is my eyes is a little bad.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF I broke two pair of glasses by putting them in this pocket. Still have the case right here in your pocket. I put them in my hip pocket, sit on them, break them. Now this my third eyes.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Yeah, I mean I just see ordinary but I mean actually they get blurry you know, too long you know.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF No, I canr ead very well.

FW <unintelligible text>

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INF Oh, no! I had cats.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF One of them was named little Nell. That's my little kitten. Wasn't no, wasn't no bigger than this here, you know, I used to play with it, wrestle with it. I was about I say about nine years old. Then I liked chickens. Then they had chickens in the city -- Washington, D.C. <gap> Like a chicken in the yard. But not now, I mean that was then. Goats and everything.

Fw <unintelligible text>

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INF Horses? Yeah, but I can't ride them. I'm allergic to the horse, I don't know why. I always catch them by their foot but I couldn't get on his back. Now, what else you want to know? I used to take a hook.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF School? I was talking about my bicycle. Three wheeled bicycle. One wheel in front, two wheels behind. I used to <gap> call it a racer. I was small. I'd say I was eleven years old then. Like like with an old empty car, something like that, I'd get behind that and drive... (yes) I didn't go no where. I just moved the wheels. And then I wound up being a good driver. <gap> Thirty oneyears. I never -- got this <gap> now, last year -- never had a mark or made a mark. Not even <gap> stop sign, just you know, well they got lights now. Before

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you had to stop when you couldn't hardly see it. <gap> But anyway, never had no marks, or points or anything. Just, now -- I was a teen ager then. I remember one time I stole a Model T Ford. Yeah, three little pedels you know? <gap> Me and three more other guys together, you know, <gap> so we said, I want to drive one of those automobiles 'cause I was living then 612 L Street <gap> So, then I put the bicycle down, am I talking to fast?, then we had a .. .a bicycle see, break it down and make it a racer, there maybe a little girl behind you, get <unintelligible text>, put your hands on your shoulder, and ride. Oy that was fun. Now I'm an old man. Can't walk to the end of the block, hardly. I can make it, but you know...Alot of things I see today that these guys doing now, youngsters, what not

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<unintelligible text> never had nothing like that. We no more -- we may go to a store now and but ah the guy had a little <unintelligible text> like that, then he goin' to tell your mother. You get a whippin'. Better not tell your father <unintelligible text> may whip <unintelligible text>. And he whip you , but now you can't touch a child. He'll tell you you're not my father, you're not my mother. You know. We didn't do nothing like that. No sir. Nothing like that. But the funny thing is I don't know. Right now, you know I'm scared to go out on the street at night time? I ain't looking for nothing, but I mean <unintelligible text> something <unintelligible text> happens you don't know what's happening. You got to walk, look around. And in the day time. They don't only catch a guy that's got money. They catch a guy that don't have no money. <unintelligible text> you don't have no money they whip you anyhow 'cause you don't have it. So there you go.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF That's for darn sure. Now, what else?

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FW <unintelligible text>

INF After school? What I majored in and what? I didn't major in nothing

FW <unintelligible text>

INF <gap> I can write.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Like history?

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Now you're calling back... I don't know too much.... way back now, let's see --

FW <unintelligible text>

INF I had <unintelligible text> That was ah that was First and L. That was Jones School that little white thing

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aircondition <gap> school now. That was Jones School back then. That was <gap> then. Third and K. Still a school up there now but I mean it's another concern. <gap> Young boys, <gap> I went there. Went to Jones, <unintelligible text> <gap>. I was in Seventh

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B then. After I went to Armstrong. I told you I didn't go to Dunbar. You had to meet Miss so and so and so and so. You had to well say -- they had a preferecne there. You know you've got to be Dr. <gap> what not. <gap> Anyway I went to <gap>. You went there if you qualified now. But I <gap> so I went to Armstrong school on trade. Now, like history and I don't know. I forget the other ones. I tell you some of the things but it may be going back further back than you would choose.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Well, I -- see when you -- that's the type of question you've got to think you know. When it comes to something like you walk in and say how you feeling well I don't know <gap> half way up the block <gap> I say I think I've seen that fellow somewhere before, you know. And then it come to me it dawn on me and you <unintelligible text> the corner. You <unintelligible text> the corner. That's the way it goes.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Was out?

FW <unintelligible text>

INF When school let out?

FW <unintelligible text>

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INF All right. I put it back to second or third grade. I skipped the first grade. I never went to kindergarten. First grade, first to the- third shows how much I had up here. <unintelligible text> then I had <unintelligible text> behind that then Miss ah <unintelligible text> All them women. <unintelligible text> was principal.

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The Jones School. Same old school <gap> the high school over there -- wasn't nothing like that then. Was houses all through there then. <gap> They gave me a big pickle, sour pickle and a piece of candy, stick down in there, that's my lunch.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Yes, sir. Now from school it was direct home. Then I had to you know, tend to the house chores like cut the wood or bring the coal in from the you know, the yard. Then I asked, could I got out. When I was seventeen years old I didn't know what a girl was. I knew there was a girl but I mean... you know <gap> I was a big old dude, bigger than I am now. Seventeen years old, yes sir.

FW <unintelligible text>

INF <unintelligible text>

FW <unintelligible text>

INF Well, ah we had the <gap> well it was a pageant, it was a play. That was ah let's see, on 10th and U street. Now this was years now. See I was a youngster now. I'm up in

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my teens now and ah it was Duke Ellington's band. I don't know where he lived, I'm just saying you know and I <gap>, <unintelligible text>. I know, <unintelligible text> was her last name, <unintelligible text>. My teacher, I used to keep me after school after everybody all the other kids go home. <gap> I used to kiss her and everything like that. I was a young boy, yeah I was something, man oh man, I was terrible. But I never did <gap> I don't understand that. So, all right, now. Now they had this pagaent up at Temple U, that's what the name of the place -- used to be a club pool.

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Anyway, what I'm saying-- I saw her -- I don't know what dawned on me but I saw that lady and she said -- <unintelligible text> that's me. I looked around <gap> I don't know LeRoy. Got my old man. That was her -- her and her husband. And we danced together. After I got to be a young man -- now I got ideas, no w you know. I started dating.

END